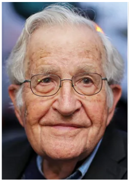
Alison Weir



Noam Chomsky

Jeffrey Blankfort

ALLISON WEIR INTERVIEWS CHOMSKY- July 8, 2010

In an interview on the Council for the National Interest internet radio program “Jerusalem Calling,” MIT Professor Noam Chomsky, author of The Fateful Triangle and other books on Israel-Palestine, said that he opposes boycotting Israel.

In a July 8th interview with new CNI President Alison Weir, Dr. Chomsky at first denied that he opposed the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement, calling this an “internet rumor.”

However, when Weir said she had heard him say that he opposed boycott during a lecture at the University of California Berkeley several years ago, Chomsky admitted that he had opposed boycotting Israel then and said that he still did so now. He said that he felt that activists should instead only divest from American companies.

Chomsky claimed that the boycott movement “hurts Palestinians,” because he felt it was “hypocritical to boycott Israel and not the US, which funds Israeli actions.” Weir pointed out that many authors – among them Donald Neff, George Ball, Stephen Green, Kathleen Christison, Edward Tivnan, Walt and Mearsheimer, and, most recently, Grant Smith – have provided massive evidence that the primary reason the U.S. supports Israel is the Israel Lobby (the most powerful lobby for a foreign country in the US).

Chomsky, who has consistently denied the power of the Israel Lobby, said that AIPAC (the American Israel Public Affairs Committee) would use the charge that the Palestinian support movement is allegedly “hypocritical” to undermine its effectiveness, and that therefore this boycott would be harmful to Palestinians. While this statement appeared to indicate that Chomsky now acknowledges the power and significance of the Israel lobby, later in the interview he continued to deny the importance of this lobby.

In response to Chomsky’s assertion that the boycott movement allegedly hurts Palestinians, Weir pointed out that Palestinian civil society overwhelmingly calls for such a boycott. She said that over a hundred different Palestinian groups – including farmers’ groups, women’s groups, and others – have asked for an international boycott of Israel.

A caller to the show, long-time Middle East analyst Jeffrey Blankfort, commented that he felt it was highly inappropriate and condescending for Chomsky, a Jewish-American who had lived on a Kibbutz and says that he supports Israel, to tell Palestinians what’s good for them. Blankfort has long criticized Chomsky’s perspective on the lobby.

During the interview, Chomsky said that he has long favored a binational state. He said that he felt that the call for a "single, secular, democratic state" did not make much sense, suggesting that calls for one state were "rhetorical" and did not "rise to the state of advocacy" because proponents had not sketched out a path of how to get there. He did not comment on the books on this subject by Ali Abunimah and Virginia Tilley, which contain in-depth discussions on this approach.

Because technical problems caused occasional problems during the program, Weir, who is also executive director of If Americans Knew, has invited Chomsky to come on the show again so that he may explain his position further. Chomsky accepted the invitation and will appear again in a few months when his schedule permits.

The interview, in which Chomsky also discusses other aspects of the Israel-Palestinian conflict, can be heard in full on the CNI: Jerusalem Calling section of the WS Radio website. Outgoing CNI President Eugene Bird says that CNI will post a transcript on the CNI website within a few days.

Draft transcript of Alison Weir interview with Noam Chomsky on "CNI Jerusalem Calling, July 8, 2010:

Welcome to CNI Jerusalem Calling. I'm your host today Alison Weir, I'm Executive Director of If Americans Knew and I'm the new President of the Council for the National Interest, the host of this show. Today I'm very excited to have with us an extremely prominent author, professor, linguist, philosopher. Our guest today, from the wilds of Massachusetts, is Noam Chomsky, an American linguist, philosopher, cognitive scientist and political activist. He is an institute professor and professor emeritus of linguistics at MIT– the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Prof Chomsky is well-known in the academic and scientific community as one of the fathers of modern linguistics. Of course I suppose and expect he is actually much wider known throughout the US and throughout the world as a political dissident, as an activist, as someone committed to human rights and justice and who writes about these topics frequently, about issues all over the world. Prof Chomsky was an early critic—relatively—of Israel, when much of the left was not talking about Israeli violence and oppression of Palestinian human rights. Mr. Chomsky wrote a book called "The Fateful Triangle: the United States, Israel, and the Palestinians." The book I believe was first published in 1983 and it is still in print today. I'm hoping Mr. Chomsky is on the line with us, but I'm told that his connection is very poor. So, Prof. Chomsky, can you hear me?

Chomsky: Hello, yes

Weir: Hello

Chomsky: I should—I might add I had actually started writing and speaking about the occupation in 1967 and there were earlier books, too.

Weir: That's excellent. That was actually one of my questions – when you had first begun to write on this. So was that precipitated by I assume the Six Day war in 1967 or did it precede that war?

Chomsky: Well, I had actually been quite critical before, but I hadn't published. The first publications were almost shortly after the 67 War and the occupation.

Weir: Ok. Now looking back through the bio that I see on Wikipedia, and I'm sure we both know how often that's not an accurate source, but it sometimes is and sometimes has useful information. It says that you had gone to work on a kibbutz in about 1953, I believe it was.

Chomsky: yeah. 1953, yes. My wife went back in 1955 and we thought of staying there in fact.

Weir: I guess what's curious to many of us is at that point… you know 1953, is not very many years after one of the major ethnic cleansings of the 20th century. Ah-

Chomsky: After? Sorry, I didn't hear it. Not long after what?

Weir: after one of the major ethnic cleansings of the 20th century

Chomsky: the nakba you mean?

Weir: the 1947 to 49 nakba, or Catastrophe, in which as you know, but some listeners might not,

Chomsky: That's –That's true

Weir: –well over 700,000 Palestinians were pushed off the land. And I'm, now—were you not aware of that?

Chomsky: Oh, I was very well aware of it in fact I had been a critic of the concept of a Jewish state even before it was established. I mean, in the 1940s I was what was called a Zionist youth leader. But Zionism at that time included my own position, which was opposition to a Jewish state and a call for a binational settlement in the former Palestine. And I still held the—one of the reasons I went to that specific kibbutz was that it was—actually its origins were as a Buberite kibbutz and it was the, essentially the outreach to the Israeli Arab population, what was left of it, from Haroshima Zair – the kibbutz organization which had indeed been opposed to a Jewish state up 'til 1948.

Weir: And I think that aspect of the history is is largely unknown to many people, that there was some fairly early on when people arrived in Palestine and saw that it was inhabited that there was a strain of Zionists who quickly recognized that that was a huge injustice and tried to come up with a different form of Zionist– of Zionism that would become this kind of binational state that you're describing your kibbutz, apparently, was in favor of.

Chomsky: And there were several such groups. The one that's best known is the group a very small group of well-known intellectuals, Judah Magnus, Martin Buber, several others. But there was also popular organizations which were socialist, left wing. So a substantial part of the kibbutz movement and probably 20% or so of the labor organization were not only calling for binationalism but for binationalism based on Arab-Jewish working class cooperation in a socialist state. Now today those notions may seem odd but they are by no means out of place in the context of the 1930s and the 1940s.

Weir: Now today of course Zionism has taken on a meaning of creating specifically a Jewish state.

Chomsky: That's correct

Weir: A few years ago, I believe, I'm not actually I don't know the date, but that you called yourself a Zionist. Did you–

Chomsky: What I said was that I remain a Zionist in the sense of Zionism in the 1940s. Zionism has changed, that doesn't mean my views have.

Weir: Ok and so your view today—is that –What is your view of Israel today? And what would be–

Chomsky: Well, that's a long question.

Weir: –you feel a fair, long-term solution?

Chomsky: Internally, the occupation is simply criminal. That's pretty straightforward. In fact as far back as late '67, the Israeli government recognized, its legal advisors informed it, including the attorney general, that any settlement in the Occupied Territories was in violation of international law. Of course, the expansion and annexation of Jerusalem was in violation not only of international law but in explicit violation of United Nations resolutions. And that continues. The siege, moving to today, the siege of Gaza was once again just a couple of weeks ago was declared by the International Committee of the Red Cross was declared to be a violation of the Geneva conventions—the core of humanitarian international law. So without going on with the details, its just a criminal operation and understood to be. Within Israel itself, that is within the so-called Green Line, the demarcation line that is regarded as the international border, but within Israel itself, there is, it is a democratic state in the sense of the Western democracies, it's discriminatory, there are laws, and more than laws administrative practices, that assign second class citizenship to Palestinians, but in that respect I'm sorry to say that its not different from the United States and other Western democracies.

Weir: Well, I wonder if, I think that there are probably quite a few people who would feel that it's considerably worse. That the state itself identifies itself publicly as a jewish state—that that's its announced identity, which of course is systemic discrimination against any non-Jews within that state.

Chomsky: That's exactly why I've been opposed to a Jewish state since the 1940s and remain so. But I was talking about the specific laws and administrative practices. We are very familiar with sharp discrimination, severe discrimination in laws and administrative practices in the United States and other Western democracies. Sure, it's to be deplored but we uh can't claim it doesn't exist.

Weir: Sorry I didn't—I just didn't hear your last statement

Chomsky: I'm sorry?

Weir: So you feel that it should be deplored. Many people feel that it's to be changed as well. much like with–

Chomsky: To be what?

Weir: To be changed.

Chomsky: Sorry I didn't hear you.

Weir: Ok. And also changed.

Chomsky: also what?

Weir: Just as the way–Let me try again, it must be hard to hear just one word. The idea is that many people feel that only focusing on the occupation is a little bit as though, during the aparteid years of South Africa activists around the world had complained only when South Africa expanded, reather than working on specifically the inherent systematized discrimination of that state itself. That in the case of Israel, focusing on the occupation to the exclusion of the systemic nature of Israel itself and the way it treats its non-Jewish citizens is also of interest.

Unfortunately we're just–I think I can hear the music coming up–

Chomsky: yeah

Weir: –and that means we're just about to take a break. And we'll come right back with Professor Chomsky and CNI Jerusalem Calling. Please stay with us.

Weir: Hello, welcome back. I'm your host today on CNI's Jerusalem Calling. My name is Alison Weir, with me today I'm very excited to have an extremely prominent writer and philosopher and scientist and activist Professor Noam Chomsky, Professor Emeritus at MIT who has written very powerfully and factually about Israel/Palestine for many many years. We will be opening our phone lines early today because I'm sure so many of you welcome this opportunity to speak directly with Professor Chomsky. You can call us with your short questions and comments at 877-474-3302. Again the number is 877-474-3302. Skype callers can skype us at wsradiostudio so skype us at wsradiostudio or phone us with your questions or comments and we'll be happy to give you an opportunity to speak with Noam Chomsky. Before the break we were talking about the problem within the Israeli system itself that really transcends the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza that began in 1967. Professor Chomsky, do you feel that that's an aspect that is important to address today? And also what is your view of what's called the one-state solution?

Chomsky: : Well, you if I could just make a comment about what you said right before the break, you said that many people think that we should pay attention to the discriminatory and repressive legal and administration system within Israel. I quite agree, which is exactly why I've been writing about it for 40 years, probably more than anyone I can think of. So I wrote the introduction to Sabri Jeryis' book The Arabs in Israel, the first major book on the topic back in the 70s. Back around 1980 I published what I suppose is the first detailed, critical examination of the racist land laws and I continue to write about that until today and so on so sure yeah a lot of people are should be concerned about that and I'm glad that some people join me in being concerned. I wish they would do more about it. However as other people have said before, in this respect Israel unfortunately is not different from other western democracies, including the United States. I'm sure I do not have to discuss here the way Hispanics have been treated in the US and still are. So yes we should be concerned about that and our priority of course always should be exactly where we are, right here. But sure I would be happy to have other people to join me in my own critical discussions of the last 40 years of these practices and laws of Israel which are evolving to some extent.

As for the so-called one-state solution we have to be clear about what it means. First of all, is it calling for a single, secular, democratic state or for a bi-national state? That's a crucial difference. The call for a bi-national state makes perfect sense, now that's why I've been supporting it since the 1940s. The idea of one, secular state doesn't make much sense in complex, diverse societies. In fact, even in Europe and this is in particular the case there are two communities they have different languages, different cultures, they want to maintain their own identity, they have every right to, and in a bi-national state that federation or state that could be achieved. But there's a much more serious question. We have to ask whether these proposals, let's call it a one-state proposal, whether they are intended as mere rhetoric or as actual advocacy. Now there is a difference. It's very easy to say to propose for example that everyone should live in peace and love each other. That's a proposal. It rises to the level of advocacy when we sketch out a path from here to there. Now as far as I'm aware there is only one suggestion for actual advocacy today, it was different in the past. So for example in the early 1970s when I wrote and spoke about it I called I wrote about published a book and wrote many articles about moving directly to a bi-national state because there was a path then directly to that outcome. Now that changed in the mid-1970s when Palestinian nationalism finally reached the international agenda. And ever since then there has been, to my knowledge, exactly one form of actual advocacy of a bi-national or one-state settlement and that's in stages. Of passing first through first the two-state proposals of the general international consensus, moving on from there to closer integration and relations and finally, at least I would hope, going to a kind of bi-national state that I've supported since the 1940s. If there's another form of advocacy I have yet to see it. So it's fine to say the words but if we want to be serious and advocate that settlement we have to sketch the path from here to there and if there's another proposal about that I haven't seen it.

Weir: Well, I do think there are two, several proposals that have been around awhile. And also that many of us are not really in favor of nationalistic types of approaches we prefer more human rights approaches. But what I'd like to do now we have two callers so I have to share my time with these callers. We'll take the first one who's been on the line now for I think at least close to five minutes. Jeff is calling I believe from Washington, D.C. Jeff could you give us your name and your comment and questions please and please stay on the line and we'll allow some more follow-up exchanges as we go forward.

Jeff Blankfort: Yes, hello. My name is Jeff Blankfort I happen to be in Washington, D.C. at the moment though I live in California. I'm actually puzzled by the so much attention that we pay here in the United States to what the solution should be for the Israel/Palestine conflict. When we were campaigning against let's say the war in Vietnam or against apartheid in South Africa what we called for and worked mostly was for ending the war in Vietnam, withdrawing the troops. In South Africa we talked about sanctions and what we can do here in the United States to [noise] movement what the solution should be. It was of course one man one vote which is something I would say for every single place but we're not the ones here that has any kind of influence on determining what the settlement should be whether it's one-state, bi-national or two-states since we as a movement actually have no influence.

I'm much more concerned about what we can do here in the United States and I was here in Washington Wednesday for a panel discussion which I moderated on Israel's Nuclear Arsenal on how Israel was able to divert or their agents here in the United States were able to divert heavy, excuse me, highly-enriched uranium to Israel back in the 60s and 70s. That was spoken by Grant Smith we had Sasha Polokow-Suransky speaking about the Israel- South Africa nuclear connection and Professor John Mearsheimer speaking about whether or not US support for Israel is in the US strategic interest and particularly…on this program. Now the night before, of course, Benjamin Netanyahu came back to Washington as a "conqueror" and it's interesting Dana Milbank, who writes for the Washington Post, who had criticized Professor Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt after they wrote their book on the Israel lobby had an extraordinary article which he called Alliance or Dysfunctional Relationship? The headline was changed on the internet in which he said instead of flying the US flag over the White House the White House officials might've instead flown the white flag of surrender. He goes on to say on Tuesday Obama routed and humiliated by his Israeli counterpart invited Netanyahu back to the White House to what might be called the oil-boy summit. He said Obama totally caved into Netanyahu when it came to Israel's nuclear strategic ambiguity and, what's his name, Dana Milbank wrote oh he said Obama came to office with an admirable hope of reviving Middle East peace reports by appealing to the Arab world and positioning himself as more of an honest broker but now he has now learned the painful lesson that domestic politics won't allow such a stand.

Now Professor Chomsky for years has ignored the role of domestic politics and has insisted that the US leads the rejectionist camp, and I just would wonder if being humiliated by the Israeli Prime Minister as Obama has been now on several occasion and previous American Presidents have if this is theatre designed to cover up the US support for Israeli expanding settlements and how if not does this embarrassment, humiliation at the part of an Israeli Prime Minister work against US strategic interests so-called around the world?

Chomsky: I don't think I heard the last part of that, when you're talking about –

Weir: Unfortunately I now hear that music which means we have another break that's just coming up. Professor Chomsky right after the break. We'll come back to Professor Chomsky and thank you very much.

Weir: Welcome back. This is Alison Weir with our today Professor Noam Chomsky. We have two callers on the line. Jeff Blankfort has asked a question that I'll just we'll get Professor Chomsky to answer and then Kathleen from Athens has been waiting patiently – thank you Kathleen hold on a little bit longer. I believe we also dropped a call from someone named Howie so Howie please feel free to try calling back in a little while. I was dropped too so sometimes we do have these technical difficulties. But right now I guess basically I guess Jeff's question was a question of the Israel Lobby that has become I think even more blatant in recent months and certainly years although it's been a major force for many many years and Jeff Blankfort is raising that question. Professor Chomsky what would you like to say to Jeff's earlier comment.

Chomsky: Actually what it [noise] retail commerce is called into [noise] and once they send those high tech weapons to Israel and then Saudi Arabia and the other, the Emirates come along and say well we want them too and the US military can provide them at which they of course pay for with masses of less advanced weaponry and in general military intelligence cooperation between Israel and the United States has been very close for many years so sure there are many factors that domestic factors that we should definitely pay attention to that we consider how policy’s formed I don’t quite understand why I’m being asked that question since I’ve been doing just that for many years including right now. But with regard to Obama’s so-called capitulation if you read what he says basically re-iterating what he said all along. There’s not a capitulation there’s just a collapse of illusions which had been there in the first place

Weir: That’s right – just to get to some of the tactics involved, I remember just a few years ago I was at the UC Berkeley when the question was asked following your lecture on Israel-Palestine about boycotting Israel, and at that time you were you spoke against using boycott, sanctions, and divestments against Israel. Do you feel still feel that way or do you now agree that boycott, sanctions and divestment – a movement that has grown considerably – is a strategy that you endorse?

Chomsky: I clearly cannot deal with the rumors that circulate in the internet gossip system. I mean, I’ve been in favor of the divestments since 2002 – in fact before the movement was even formed I was one of the sponsors of one of the first efforts. And I’ve repeatedly supported and in fact been one of the initial supporters of divestment efforts. What I have opposed is the BPS proposals that harm Palestinians. If we’re serious about BPS or any other tactic we oughta want to ask what the consequences are for the victims. We can we have to distinguish always and tactical judgments between what you might call the feel-good tactics and do-good tactics. There are tactics that may make people feel good look I feel good I’m doing something but they harm the victims. There are other kinds that actually do good that is they advantage the victims. That’s a distinction we have to make and it’s a critical one especially when I think about it but where there are actual do good efforts of BPS I’ve always supported them. In fact long before the program became even announced itself.

Weir: Yes and we’re certainly agree that many people would rather look good than really do something that will be effective and successful, so I think we both feel very strongly that it’s important to do something valuable, not just look like you are. But in terms of the internet rumors I was actually in the audience when you spoke at Berkely and answered the question about boycott and recommended against boycott at that time, so this is not a rumor this is —

Chomsky: what was the question? Where did you hear this?

Weir: The question was whether you supported boycott against Israel and you said no at that time. A number of very —

Chomsky: Yeah I still oppose boycotts. So, yes, I do oppose a boycott I think that’s harmful to Palestinians. And the reason it’s harmful is very obvious. It is so hypocritical that it discredits the whole effort.

Weir: But Professor Chomsky–

Chomsky: - why boycott Israel and not boycott the United States which has a much worse record.

Weir: Well I think I think many people–

Chomsky: we take positions that are [interruption] May I continue?

Weir: I think many people actually–

Chomsky: May I continue? May I continue?

Weir: I just wanted to interrupt with one one point – that Palestinian civil society is very unified and issued a call signed by dozens and dozens of diverse organizations all calling for boycott. So here the Palestinians…

Chomsky: There are groups who call themselves Palestinian civil society who are calling for a boycott and I think they're making a mistake and I've explained why. I'm not going to take to adopt positions which have already been and will continue to be quite harmful to Palestinians. If you want to do that do it…

But it's clear why the call for boycott has been harmful for Palestinians and will continue to be. The reason is very simple. It is so utterly hypocritical that it's basically a gift to hardliners they can say look you're calling for a boycott of Israel but you're not calling for a boycott of the United States which has a much worse record matter of fact is even responsible for much of Israel's crimes. So if you're position is that hypocritical how can we take it seriously? That's like giving a gift to the most hard-line elements. On the other hand there are very sensible proposals like for example the Berkely proposal which in fact I was one of the early supporters of , but they call for divestment from US corporations which are involved in activities in the Occupied Territories. Yeah, that makes good sense for two reasons. For one reason is it's not hypocritical; it's directed right where it oughta be, to ourselves and say look we should stop carrying out criminal acts. For another it's completely justifiable – there's and in fact it even conforms to US law and international law so sure things like the Berkely divestment effort make a lot of sense same with the [?] effort and many others. But there are proposals which are of just the feel-good variety and it doesn't matter who supports them there's still the objective fact that they have hurt and will continue to harm the victims that we are trying to protect for reasons that are very simple and straightforward.

Weir: Well of course there's a massive amount of evidence in numerous books that US support of Israel damages US interests and has been argued against by much of the establishment of the United States since before the formation of Israel. It was well-documented in Donald Neff's book, in books by Kathleen Christison, by Paul Findley, by George Ball, most recently by Walt and Mearsheimer. A number of military officers are once again – many people think this is new – have been saying for decades that Israel is a strategic liability to the United States. The reason that there is as you point out massive support for Israel by the United States is the work of a very powerful lobby. We know that lobbies in Washington DC are often powerful and they often set legislation especially if there's almost no counter-lobby. So in this case we've had a very powerful, very focused lobby setting the agenda in Washington DC even when military officers and the oil lobby – originally the ARAMCO lobby opposed was actively opposing support for Israel. So for that reason many people feel it is quite appropriate to boycott Israel itself, in addition to US corporations and Americans that support human rights abuses anywhere. But Israel itself is a nation, a sovereign nation, and usually would be the target of such a boycott and usually someone like you would endorse that. So I find it surprising that you don't. But let me go on.

Chomsky: I find it surprising I find your commitment to harming Palestinians quite surprising. It is quite obvious why a call for the boycott to Israel is a gift to AIPAC. It's a gift because they can point at once that it is utterly hypocritical. We are not boycotting the United States for example which has a much worse record and is in fact responsible, as you just said, for a great deal of Israel's criminal behavior. This has happened in the past, and I can give you cases if you want, where calls like the kind you're advocating have in fact for good reason harmed the victims we're trying to protect.

[attempted interruption]

Chomsky: –May I continue?

Weir: Well you've just said, you—

Chomsky: Let me continue. You've made a lot of points and I'd like to comment on them. If you don't want me to comment—

Weir: Certainly

Chomsky: — then let's just stop the discussion.

Weir: No but I think an exchange is valuable sometimes but…

Chomsky: Then let's have an exchange on what you said. Ok? I mentioned one part of it. The one part that I object to is your support for efforts which are basically gifts to the hardliners. But you made another point about the many claims that support for Israel is opposed to US national interest. Now the term national interest these are all very vague notions but let me return to what I said before. The strongest support for Israel in the United States comes from the business sector. That's why the Wall Street Journal is the most strong pro-Israel journal. That's why you get increasing high-tech investment in Israel. That's why you have things. That's why the military lobby supports it. Now you can argue that this is against something called the national interest, whatever that is but in so far as the national interest is determined by powerful domestic forces in the United States…

Weir: I'm sorry we're at a break – we'll come right back.

Weir: Welcome back, this is Alison Weir with our guest today Noam Chomsky. Just to set the record straight and I do want Mr. Chomsky to have as much time as he would like to answer my questions. To set the record straight, Palestinian civil society that has called for a boycott consists of over thirty groups – there are more, I am looking here, and it's close to one hundred groups. And there are groups such as the Union of Palestinian Farmers, a number of different groups such as the Union of Health Work Committees of Gaza, the Union of Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees, the Health Work Committees, the Consortium of Professional Associations. So this is really a widespread call. Now Mr. Chomsky may feel that it is not an effective call, but it is certainly what Palestinians themselves are asking for, just to clarify the facts on that particular issue. But I know, Mr. Chomsky, you have more that you wanted to address about what I had said.

Chomsky: Yes I did address more of it, and I think I spoke for a while, and I think it was cut off by an advertisement. So I suppose there’s no point in trying to repeat it. I discussed the rest of the points you had made about domestic foreign policy in the national interest and I can repeat that if you like. But just to keep to this point, there are segments of Palestinian society that have called for a boycott. We have to ask if whether we should follow that advice or whether we should consider what the consequences are. And the consequences are in fact quite clear. We have already had illustrations of it; I can give you examples if you like. The calls are so hypocritical for the reason I mentioned, that they are simply a gift to the hard right, most hard line supporters of Israeli expansion and oppression, and there’s perfectly good reasons for it. As soon as such proposals are made, the response from the hardliners: you’re a complete hypocrite. You’re not calling for the boycott of the U.S., or England or on and on. And I don’t see any point in putting guns in the hands of the oppressors, which is exactly what that call is. That’s quite independent who asks for it, we have to make our decisions on the basis of the likely consequences. And I think in this case it is quite clear. With regard to this so called national interest, I’ll repeat what I said which was cut off by the ad, or I can repeat it.

Weir: We did hear that. At least I did hear your reference to the Wall Street Journal. So I did hear that part.

Chomsky: Sorry?

Weir: Sorry. I did hear your discussion about the Wall Street Journal and your suggestion that it the business community that really promotes Israel and it’s not the Israeli lobby. It is a little ironic though because here you are clearly very concerned about AIPAC, The American Israel Public Affairs Committee. And yet, you seem to suggest that it’s not significant….

Weir: Ok, this is Alison. Sorry we are having technical difficulties, that was the second time my call has been dropped. So thanks for any listeners that are still there, thanks for being patient with us. Apparently Noam Chomsky is now not on the line either, but we expect to reach him in a few minutes. Just to reiterate, he feels that AIPAC and the many different factors within the Israel lobby do not set U.S. policies. I have been discussing that with him, given that there is considerably evidence that they do. We hope to have him on soon, and when he’s on, I believe we have Kathleen from Athens who has been waiting to speak with us. So Kathleen, are you on?

Jeff Blankfort: This is Jeffery Blankfort

Weir: Jeff Blankfort is on the line.

Jeff Blankfort: Yes, yes, I find…first of all, I find it very presumptuous that a Jewish-American professor would presume to speak for the Palestinians and tell them what is right and what is wrong and what is hypocritical about them.

The fact of the matter is AIPAC is not about to call the drive for sanctions about Israel hypocritical and criticize the U.S. It is quite clear both in Israel and in the U.S. that the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement is causing great consternation in Israel and among the pro-Israel organizations here in this country. So what Professor Chomsky is creating is a straw man. It is quite clear that they are concerned because this is a movement, it hasn't developed as broadly here yet, but it is developing in Europe and around the world and people do not see the hypocrisy, so called hypocrisy, in not sanctioning the U.S. which would be virtually impossible, given US global power. But Israel is not the U.S. and is more vulnerable and the notion that Israel and Israeli companies should be off limits for Palestinians and supporters in the United States is in fact hypocritical. I was interested to hear Professor Chomsky in an interview given recently to a rather hostile Israeli television interviewer acknowledge, saying "I am a supporter of Israel", this is what he said, and until 5 or 6 years ago had considered even living there, except Israel seems to have changed in the last 5 or 6 years. But for someone who says he's a supporter of Israel and to accuse those of us, who are legitimately supporting the Palestinian cause, are hurting the Palestinian cause seems to be a tactic Professor Chomsky uses over and over and over again to do what I call damage control for Israel.

Weir: Can you hold that, I am happy to be informed that it appears that Professor Chomsky is back on the line with us again. Oh', I guess he's not, I think he was for a time. I apologize to Prof Chomsky, even though he's not hearing me right now, and we will certainly invite him to be back with us again if we can't get him on again right now. But he will certainly be invited to be on the show again to answer fully some of these questions we have. So until Professor Chomsky is on, Jeff, we have you on, you were one of our first guests on the show, this is Jeff Blankfort from California, originally, now in D.C.

Jeff Blankfort: Just for a couple of days.

Weir: Just for a very important panel.

Weir: I believe we just have a few more minutes, so Jeff, would you like to address, with thirty seconds, you have thirty seconds for a final comment.

Jeff Blankfort: basically, I think we should not focus on what the solution should be in Israel-Palestine but we should focus on what we can do to hold our politicians' feet to the fire, because quite clearly what we see is the Israel lobby's chokehold on the U.S. congress and unless we recognize it and deal with it on a local level…

Weir: Kathleen, if you're there, I think you have twenty seconds.

Kathleen: I wanted to ask Professor Chomsky about Rachel Maddow, Keith Olbermann, Chris Matthews, Diane Rehm, all these people ignoring the Goldstone Report and that forty percent of the West Bank is occupied by Israel.

Weir: Thank you Kathleen and we'll get back to you next week, I hope. This is Jerusalem Calling, Alison Weir.